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Recommended Citation

Wadsworth, Sarah, "The Archibald Henderson Collection" (2000). *English Faculty Research and Publications*. 186.

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SHAW The Annual of Bernard Shaw Studies, Vol. 20 (2000): 169-173. [Publisher Link](#). This article is © Penn State University Press and permission has been granted for this version to appear in [e-Publications@Marquette](#). Penn State University Press does not grant permission for this article to be further copied/distributed or hosted elsewhere without the express permission from Penn State University Press.

IX. The Archibald Henderson Collection

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[Some Principal Shaw Research Sources]

Late in the spring of 1904, Bernard Shaw received a surprising request: an academician in North Carolina wished to write his biography. The previous year Archibald Henderson, professor of mathematics at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, had set aside his researches into the "Twenty-seven Lines upon the Cubic Surface" to attend a Chicago production of *You Never Can Tell*. Completely captivated by the play, Henderson proceeded to read everything he could by and about its author. Several months later, when he had exhausted available resources, he determined to write to Shaw, proposing himself as biographer. Shaw's reply, as astonishing as Henderson's *ad hoc* proposition, was affirmative, and soon it was agreed that the math professor from North Carolina would become Shaw's authorized biographer.

In spite of haphazard beginnings, the partnership thus formed proved to be an enduring and mutually profitable one that lasted until Shaw's death forty-six years later. Not only did Archibald Henderson complete the proposed biography, *Bernard Shaw: His Life and Works* (1911), but he went on to produce two more full-length lives of Shaw in addition to a host of other books and articles on the playwright and his plays. By Henderson's own account, he published more than one hundred magazine and newspaper articles on Shaw, and for many years these texts were considered the authoritative sources on his life and work. But Henderson's gift to future

Shavians far exceeds the critical and biographical texts he published, for he consigned an abundance of materials pertaining to his studies of Shaw, together with his extensive personal collection of Shaviana, to the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. The archive that developed around this hefty array of materials now forms one of the premier repositories of books, manuscripts, correspondence, pictures, and other items by or pertaining to Shaw.

The Archibald Henderson Collection of George Bernard Shaw comprises two distinct components. The first, the Rare Book archive established by Henderson in 1948 and enlarged through subsequent donations and purchases, currently contains several thousand items by or about Shaw. Among some 3,000 printed volumes in the collection are nearly all the first editions of Shaw's plays, comprehensive collections of later editions, foreign translations, and extensive holdings of Shaw's non-dramatic publications, including Fabian Society tracts and other ephemera. Many of the books that belonged to Henderson contain inscriptions, annotations, or commentary penned by Shaw for the benefit of his biographer. The Collection also contains fifty-five proof or rehearsal copies of the plays, along with Shaw's own corrected prompt copies of *How He Lied to Her Husband: A Warning to Playgoers* (London, ca. 1904) and *The Shewing-up of Blanco Posnet* (London, 1909). These early texts offer valuable insight into the development of the plays from manuscript drafts to published works. The balance of the Collection's Rare Book holdings consists of more than one thousand playbills, programs, and pictures of productions, 350 photographs, 240 cartoons and caricatures, and eighty-six volumes containing hundreds of newspaper and magazine clippings (mainly from English-language sources) by or about Shaw. These items, representing nearly a century of news coverage (1887–1973), include reviews, articles, and "letters to the editor" written by Shaw, records of Shaw's public addresses, criticism of works about Shaw, and reviews of productions of his plays.

The second repository, the Southern Historical Collection's George Bernard Shaw Papers, includes approximately 5,000 items, spanning the years 1878–1964. Although the bulk of the material consists of correspondence pertaining to Henderson's biographical and critical studies of Shaw, the Collection also contains items concerning Shaw's relationship with publishers, the Fabian Society, and production of his plays. The archive comprises letters, pictures, manuscripts, drafts, and proofs of published and unpublished works.

The Henderson Correspondence and Notes contain some 4,500 items, dated 1878–1962. Most of these are letters exchanged between Henderson and Shaw, Shaw's relations, and Shaw's secretaries during the composition of *Bernard Shaw: His Life and Works* (1911), *Bernard Shaw: Playboy and Prophet* (1932), and *George Bernard Shaw: Man of the Century* (1956). Henderson initially conceived of his first biography as a slim volume of criticism, but Shaw, who had a more ambitious vision of the work, urged him to think of himself as "a possible Gibbon," to "keep on the lines of Boswell's Johnson" (1956, xx), and ". . . make me a mere peg on which to hang a study of the last half of the XIX century . . ." (1956, xxiii). To aid in this grand endeavor, Shaw promised to supply abundant biographical facts, details about the production of his plays, and other vital information. The level of cooperation attained between biographer and subject is evident in the Henderson Correspondence and Notes both in the copious notes and letters of encouragement, instruction, criticism, and advice Henderson received from Shaw and in miscellaneous materials forwarded to the biographer for his use. Items of note include typed copies of a series of letters from Shaw to American actor Richard Mansfield and his wife in connection with various plays of the period 1894–1900, a genealogical chart concocted in 1904, four unpublished poems written by Shaw in 1913 and dedicated to Mrs. Patrick Campbell, a letter to Shaw from Albert Einstein dated 22 February 1937, and a proof of *Back to Methuselah*.

The Henderson Correspondence and Notes also contain some of Henderson's notes on Shaw, along with portions of Henderson's books and articles in drafts and proofs. The manuscript and proof of *Table-Talk of G. B. S.* (1925), which Shaw and Henderson wrote collaboratively, are present, as is the manuscript of Henderson's *Is Bernard Shaw a Dramatist?* (1929). In addition to proofs of the 1911 biography, the series also includes typed

manuscripts of Chapters II and XVII, annotated and corrected by Shaw, as well as galley sheets of Henderson's 1932 biography, which Shaw painstakingly revised during a sea voyage.

In addition to providing insight into Shaw's own version of his life, these "paratexts" (to adopt the term coined by Gérard Genette) offer a fascinating glimpse into the relationship between Henderson as biographer and Shaw as subject. The case of the 1932 biography is particularly revealing since Shaw's involvement in this text was much greater than in the 1911 biography. Shaw had been chagrined by a few passages in *Bernard Shaw: His Life and Works* that apparently escaped his notice when he reviewed the proofs, and consequently he "devoted the most meticulous study and analysis" to the new biography (1956, xxx). In addition to remarks and revisions penned directly onto the proofs, Shaw enclosed notebook pages containing explanations and justifications of his revisions, as well as line-by-line delineations of the changes. On some occasions, he went so far as to provide extensive commentary on his plays, which Henderson was to incorporate into the biography verbatim. (The most significant of these is a ten-page insert in which Shaw begins by comparing his work to Molière's and proceeds to discuss *The Doctor's Dilemma*, *Getting Married*, and *Misalliance*.) These revisions were invariably accompanied by Shaw's editorial remarks to Henderson. As Henderson explained, "On the margin he may write a brief treatise in attempted refutation of your views, or shout in blobs of red ink reserved for his most vehement protests: 'Vieux jeu' or 'Nonsense,' 'Sheer American swank!' or even 'Good God! No!'" (1932, 799). Henderson, who described himself at the outset of the 1911 biography as "the romantic young Southerner, the incense-burning admirer" (1956, xxiv), clearly could not long maintain such starry-eyed idealism in the face of Shaw's "friendly but devastating criticism" (1956, xxvii).

The George Bernard Shaw Papers contain several other components that illuminate aspects of Shaw's author-publisher relationships. Chief among these is the Constable & Co. Correspondence. This series, gleaned from the files of Shaw's British publisher, contains 238 letters and cards (Shaw's originals and the publisher's carbon replies) exchanged between Shaw and Constable & Co. chairman Otto Kyllmann from 1909 to 1950, plus additional letters between Shaw and Kyllmann's associates, secretaries, and illustrators, and between Kyllmann and Mrs. Shaw. The majority of the letters deal with Shaw's revisions, corrections, and additions to texts prior to publication of the Collected and Standard editions of his works [End Page 171] between 1930 and 1933, and, as Henderson attested, paint "a graphic picture of Shaw as publisher, printer, critic, stylist, and revisionist of the text of all his formerly published writings." *

Additional material relating to Shaw's publishing history can be found among the collection's miscellaneous items. These include documents pertaining to publication of *Three Plays for Puritans* (1901) (a memorandum of agreement between Shaw and publisher Grant Richards, receipts from the printers R. & R. Clark, Ltd., notes about proofs, and royalty statements); a typescript of the revised version of H. C. Duffin's *The Quintessence of Bernard Shaw* (1939), heavily emended and annotated by Shaw, together with letters from Shaw to Duffin concerning this work; and two 1931 agreements between Shaw and Constable & Co. and Shaw and the Fountain Press, for a volume of the playwright's correspondence with Ellen Terry.

Shaw's political views can be found in the collection's Miscellaneous series, which includes about twenty letters and cards between Shaw and C. H. Grinling, socialist member of the Woolwich Borough Council, as well as a typed manuscript of "On Driving Capital Out of the Country," corrected by Shaw; Shaw's writings on "The Hypocrisy of Our Present Position over State Lotteries"; and a manuscript containing Shaw's comments on Stalin and World War II in response to a questionnaire from Hubert Humphreys.

Remaining items of note include the Halstan correspondence, containing thirty letters from Shaw to actress Margaret Halstan and to her parents, pertaining to the production of various plays (1896–1928); and sixty-seven pictures, dated 1879–1954, including halftones, drawings, postcards, and photos of Shaw, his relations, scenes from his plays, and artwork and buildings associated with Shaw.

The online catalogue at Chapel Hill currently lists items acquired since 1979 and will eventually contain entries for the entire collection. In the meantime, the primary finding aids for the Shaw holdings are the Rare Book Collection's card catalogue, the Manuscript Department's inventory of the Shaw Papers, and house indexes to photographs, caricatures, and cartoons. Some portions of the Archibald Henderson Collection (for example, the volumes of news clippings) have not yet been catalogued.

Footnotes

- * Quoted in Phillip A. Snyder, "Bernard Shaw's Constable Correspondence: A Descriptive Essay." *The Bookmark* 53 (1985): 39–45. For further information on portions of the Henderson Collection, see Daniel Breen, *An Index to Cartoons and Caricatures Depicting George Bernard Shaw and His Contemporaries in the Archibald Henderson Collection* . . . , N.p., 1987; Daren Callahan, *An Evaluative Study of the Shaw Collection* . . . , M.A. thesis, UNC, 1989; Elaine W. Mangrum, *Index to Photographs in the Archibald Henderson Collection of George Bernard Shaw in the Rare Book Collection* . . . , N.p., 1987; and Isabel Van Rennsalaer Masterton, *The Archibald Henderson Collection of Books and Other Materials Relating to George Bernard Shaw*, M.A. theseis, UNC, 1964.